

## Modern World History

### Unit I - Renaissance and Reformation

#### Unit Background

The Middle Ages in Europe 500 – 1500AD

The name Medieval Period > *Medium* = middle and *Aveum* = age

So, Middle Ages = Medieval Period



Medieval pickup battles

When the Western Roman Empire fell to German invaders in 476 AD, the Ancient period ended and the Middle Ages began. In the centuries from 500 – 1500AD life was very different than it was when Greek and Roman culture prevailed. Life, for most, consisted of these characterizations:

- A loss of trade – money was scarce so people had to be self-sustaining
- The abandonment of cities – bridges and roads crumbled
- An end of law and order – confusion over who was in charge (think Robin Hood)
- A decline of learning – illiteracy rates skyrocketed
- A loss of a common language – local dialects replace Latin
- The concept of government changed – feudalism replaced strong, centralized leaders (more on feudalism on the back ...)
- Warfare was constant – lords battled for power and castles were needed for protection

#### The Dark Ages

The earliest part of the Middle Ages is called the Dark Ages because it was a time when fear and confusion spread through Europe. Threats of constant attacks led many people like you and me to become serfs and work for lords on manors in exchange for protection.

- Would you have liked to live during the Middle Ages? Explain why or why not in 2-3 sentences.

During the Middle Ages, the great democracies and republics of ancient Greece and Rome were replaced by a less sophisticated form of government called **feudalism**.

**Feudalism** is defined as “*a political, economic and social system based on land holding, protective alliances and personal loyalty.*”

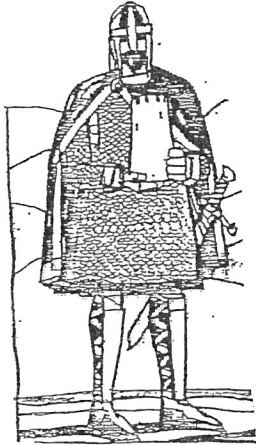
- An easier way to define feudalism is ...

Characteristics of feudalism consisted of:

- decentralization – it was hard to tell who was in charge
- lords and nobles who were given land by a king in exchange for loyalty and military protection – a lot of knights and fights
- lords acting independently of their kings in a struggle for power
- lords dividing land among lower lords who then had to provide the higher lords with their loyalty and protection

- e. lower lords (called vassals) often swore allegiance to more than one higher lord – this caused major problems
- f. religious devotion – The Roman Catholic church prevailed which meant that popes, kings and lords also argued over power ... constantly!

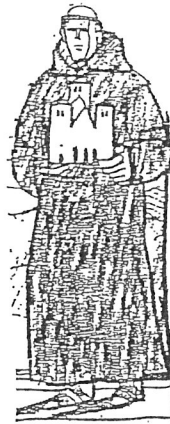
THE "THREE FACES OF FEUDALISM"  
(Social classes)



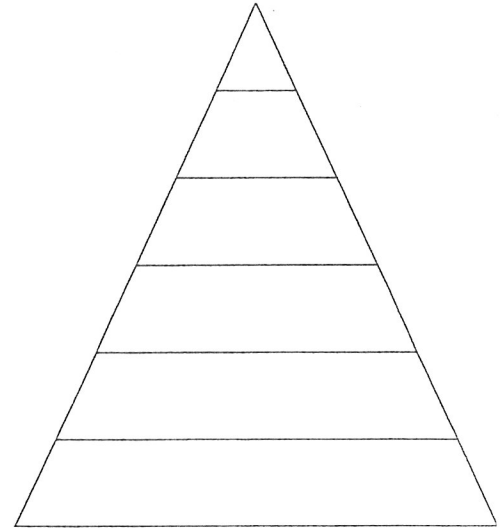
(1) Those who fought: Nobles and Knights



(2) Those who worked: Peasants



(3) Those who prayed: Men and women of the Church



3. Which of the "three faces" of feudalism would you rather be? Explain your choice.

Would Europe *EVER* wake up from the fear, confusion and chaos that was the "nightmare" called the Middle Ages?

**Yes! Europe would wake up and be RE-BORN.** This re-birth of a more modern and civilized Europe is called the **RENAISSANCE**. (Renaissance is actually the French word for re-birth.)

4. What factors do you think enabled Europe to wake up and be *reborn*?

5. In what ways do you think life would improve for Europeans in the Renaissance?

6. And, perhaps most importantly, how are our lives today connected to this amazing time period called the Renaissance?